

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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S E C R E T PANAMA 0200

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PN, PFOR, PQ

SUBJECT: TORRIJOS MEETING WITH JAVITS

1. SENATOR JAVITS HAS COMPLETED A SHORT BUT INTENSIVE AND HIGHLY USEFUL VISIT TO PANAMA. HIGHLIGHT WAS HIS CALL ON GENERAL TORRIJOS DURING AFTERNOON BEFORE LATTER'S DEPARTURE FOR CUBA. OTHER ASPECTS OF JAVITS VISIT REPORTED SEPARATELY.

2. IT WAS A TRIBUTE TO THE SENATOR'S STATURE AND TO THE LEVEL OF RELATIONS THAT CURRENTLY PREVAILS BETWEEN US AND TORRIJOS THAT THE GENERAL AGREED TO SEE THE SENATOR ON A NATIONAL HOLIDAY (DAY OF THE MARTYRS) AND LESS THAN A DAY BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR HAVANA. I ESCORTED JAVITS AND HIS AIDE, FRANK BALLANCE, TO THE INTERVIEW WHICH WAS HELD IN RORY GONZALEZ' HOME. THERE WAS EXTENSIVE TV AND CAMERA COVERAGE OF THE ARRIVAL AND OF MEMBERS OF THE PARTY. TORRIJOS WAS JOINED BY AMBASSADOR GONZALEZ REVILLA DURING THE ACTUAL TALK.

3. AFTER OPENING PLEASANTRIES, TI WAS CLEAR TORRIJOS WAS EAGER TO LEARN OF THE CURRENT MOOD IN THE CONGRESS AND AMONG THE AMERICAN PEOPLE REGARDING A NEW CANAL TREATY. JAVITS EXPLAINED THAT THIS CONTINUES TO BE A HIGHLY EMOTIONAL ISSUE AMONG MANY AMERICANS. HE ALSO SAID THERE WAS A HARD-CORE OF STRONG OPPOSITION IN THE CONGRESS AS

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WELL. BUT HE SAID THAT HE WAS PERSUADED THAT THE EIGHT

PRINCIPLES AGREED TO BY MINISTER TACK AND SECRETARY KISSINGER WERE A SOLID AND FAIR BASIS FOR ULTIMATE SOLUTION. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT A TREATY THAT FAIRLY REFLECTED THOSE PRINCIPLES WOULD WIN RATIFICATION IN THE SENATE. HE MADE CLEAR HE WOULD BE AMONG THE VOCAL ADVOCATES OF SUCH A TREATY. HE TOLD TORRIJOS THE TEST WOULD BE WHETHER THE CANAL UNDER A NEW TREATY WOULD REMAIN QUOTE SAFE, OPEN EFFICIENT AND NEUTRAL UNQUOTE.

4. JAVITS UNDERLINED THE EMOTIONAL NATURE OF THE ISSUE FOR MANY AMERICANS BUT EXPRESSED HIS CONFIDENCE THAT OVER TIME, AND AFTER PEOPLE HAVE A CHANCE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE REAL ISSUES, THEY WOULD ACCEPT A FAIR AND BALANCED SETTLEMENT. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THOSE ATTITUDES COULD BE SWAYED BY EVENTS AND BY PUBLIC STATEMENTS. HE CALLED SPECIFIC ATTENTION TO THE GENERAL'S COMING VISIT TO CUBA. HE SAID HE THOUGHT HE UNDERSTOOD THE REASONS WHY THE GENERAL FELT HE SHOULD GO. HE RECALLED THAT HE HIMSELF HAD GONE TO CUBA IN 1974, JUST BEFORE THE ELECTIONS THAT YEAR. AND HE ESTIMATED HE HAD LOST SOME 250,000 VOTES BECAUSE OF HIS JOURNEY. BUT HE FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS TO SEE CUBA WITH THEIR OWN EYES. SO HE UNDERSTOOD AT LEAST PART OF TORRIJOS' DECISION TO GO. BUT HE DID WARN THAT EXTRAVAGANT STATEMENTS OR GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT PANAMA WAS BECOMING A CUBAN ALLY WOULD HAVE THE MOST ADVERSE REACTIONS IN THE U.S.

5. TORRIJOS SAID HE UNDERSTOOD PERFECTLY WHAT THE SENATOR WAS SAYING. HE WAS AWARE OF THE PROBLEM AND HOPED HE WOULD HANDLE IT WITH FULL COMPREHENSION OF POSSIBLE EFFECTS. HE TOLD THE SENATOR THAT HE KNEW SOME PEOPLE IN THE U.S. LIKED TO PICTURE HIM AS A MILITARY DICTATOR OR AS A COMMUNIST, ETC. BUT AMERICANS WHO KNEW HIM REALIZED HOW WRONG THIS IMAGE WAS. HE HAS HIS OWN BRAND OF REVOLUTION AND HIS PURPOSE WAS TO HELP HIS PEOPLE. HE APPROVED OF MANY THINGS CUBA DID AND DISAPPROVED OF OTHERS. HE SAID FURTHER THAT THE TRIP WOULD HELP HIM MANAGE HIS OWN INTERNAL SITUATION MORE EFFECTIVELY BECAUSE MANY OF THOSE WHO CRITICIZED HIM MOST STRONGLY WERE EXTREME LEFTISTS.

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6. AS WE HAD AGREED, THE SENATOR THEN RAISED THE PROBLEM OF ANGOLA. HE SAID THAT CUBAN INTERVENTION IN THAT AFRICAN COUNTRY HAD BEEN A MAJOR SETBACK FOR ANY HOPES OF PUTTING U.S.-CUBAN RELATIONS ON A NORMAL BASIS. HE STRONGLY ADVISED TORRIJOS FROM BEING DRAWN INTO ANY SUPPORT FOR THIS CUBAN ADVENTURE. THE GENERAL SAID HE HAD HEARD FROM ME AND OTHERS ABOUT THIS AND KNEW HOW OUR

COUNTRY FELT. HE HAD NO INTENTION OF GETTING PANAMA EM-BROILED IN THIS MATTER. HE SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS A MISTAKE FOR CUBA TO BE INVOLVED THERE.

7. THE SENATOR ADDED THAT PUERTO RICO WAS ANOTHER ISSUE THAT WAS SENSITIVE IN THE U.S., BUT ONE THAT CUBA WAS TRYING HARD TO PUSH--EVEN THOUGH IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF PUERTO RICANS PREFERRED EITHER STATEHOOD OR COMMONWEALTH STATUS TO INDEPENDENCE. TORRIJOS SAID HE UNDERSTOOD OUR VIEWPOINT ON THIS ISSUE AS WELL.

8. THESE WERE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VISI WHICH LASTED ABOUT ONE HOUR AND FIFTEEN MINUTES. THE SENATOR TOLD TORRIJOS OF HIS OWN VISIT TO CUBA AND SUGGESTED HE LOOK AT SUCH THINGS AS DAIRY FARMING AND THE EDUCATION SYSTEM. THE TWO MEN ALSO ENJOYED A SOMEWHAT LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF THE SENATOR'S VISIT TO MAINLAND CHINA AND JAVITS' EXPLANATION OF THE WORKING OF THE CHINESE FARM PRODUCTION SYSTEM.

9. COMMENT: THIS WAS A THOROUGHLY FRIENDLY AND USEFUL EXCHANGE. JAVITS WAS ABLE TO REASSURE TORRIJOS REGARDING THE LONG-RANGE PROSPECTS OF A NEW TREATY. HE ALSO VERY ABLY RAISED WARNING FLAGS REGARDING THE VISIT TO CUBA AND SUBJECTS TO BE AVOIDED OR SKIRTED. THEY WERE FRESH IN THE GENERAL'S MIND WHEN HE TOOK OFF FOR HAVANA THE NEXT MORNING.

JORDEN

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